

MAGIC AND DIVINATION

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away from the spot, the people gathered hope that the patient would recover, but if it remained lying where it was, they abandoned both hope and any further treatment.¹ 787

In addition to these more or less standardized methods of divination, the Hottentots also place great faith in omens. Of these there are a great variety. Dreams, the flight and cry of birds, the direction of the wind, celestial phenomena, the beat of the pulse, nervous twitchings, forebodings—all these, according to Olpp, can have significance.² Some kinds of omen we have already described in connection with hunting, war, and the moon. Vedder records one or two others.³ Many symptoms on the body of a dying person, or on the bodies of relatives, and, above all, strange ways of behaviour among animals, are regarded as precursors of death. Again, if the corpse of a living acquaintance or a relative appears to a person in a dream, "he has to exert himself to ward off approaching death by means of circumstantial ceremonies. Having performed these ceremonies secretly, only after a year may he relate his dream, as by then the time for its realization will have expired, failing which he will be regarded as a murderer should the person die within that year and be treated accordingly."⁴ 787 763 •

The appearance of the mantis, again, is an omen of extreme good fortune. This little insect does not appear to enjoy the same reverence among the Hottentots as it does among the Bushmen, but the Nama believe that it brings luck if it creeps on a person, and no one is allowed to kill it.⁵ The Cape Hottentots, according to Graevenitcz and Koth, regarded it as a favourable omen of the highest significance.⁶ If it went so far as to alight on man or woman, says the latter, the fattest or belonging to the kind was killed. The lucky person received the entrails and the fat, and wore the caul twisted about his neck till it rotted off, or until some other person was honoured in the same way by the mantis. The flesh of the ox was cooked, and the man or the woman feasted upon it, according to the sex of the person on whom the mantis had alighted. The mantis, of course, was never killed or injured, for to do this would turn the omen into one of disaster and destruction. The insect, however, does not appear to have been prayed to (although in South Africa it is still popularly spoken of as the "Hottentot's god") nor does it figure at all in the mythology of the people. 787 825

¹ Op. cit., 112.² *Apes People*, 30.³ "The Nama," 112-13.⁴ Op. cit., 21.⁵ *Constitution*, op. cit., 349-51; Koth, op. cit., 11-12.

been done away with, the worship has ceased but the moon-⁷⁸²
light dances are still in vogue and are still regularly got up ¹⁷⁸
here and there.

The majority of the Nama have become Christians, taking
a pride in being called Christians, more or less. Heathenism
has been cast into oblivion to such an extent that the in-
vestigator can hardly expect any results from his researches
even among the old heathens still left in out of the way
places.

VI. WITCHCRAFT AND SUPERSTITIONS.

1. As is the case in all other religions, so also in the Nama⁷⁷¹
religion does the worship go hand in hand with partly stable,
partly ever-changing superstitious beliefs and customs. The
skilled eye of the investigator will be able to discriminate
between the two, and know how to keep these domains of
religion and of superstition distinctly apart. In spite of the
fact that these two are so closely related in the consciousness
of the tribe, that the one always contains the other, yet the
characteristic feature that a tribe forgets its religion and
exchanges it for another, much more easily than it gives up
its superstitions, will not go by unobserved. For this reason
it is not to be wondered at that the reports about the hereditary
religion of the Nama are very sparse and difficult to under-
stand, whereas the superstitions can easily be investigated and
related and that witchcraft is still in force, being indulged^[754]
in secretly, reservedly, avoiding all publicity in one place or
exactly and publicly in another, according to circum-
stances.

2. The Nama belief in immortality is hardly stronger than⁷⁷⁵
their fear of ghosts. Everywhere they relate of departed souls
of olden as well as of modern times, which have reappeared in
some form or another.

No wonder that the heathens never laid out graves ^{one-764}
jointly, but buried their dead somewhere in a solitary place⁷⁷⁶
and secured the grave with heavy stones. This does not only
happen because they want to protect the corpse against being
damaged by the animals of the desert, but actually also in
order to prohibit them from rising up again.

Heinich, who has already been mentioned, for this reason
entreated his subjects to cover him up with "soft stones,"
when he died, as he had the intention of rising from the
grave and would be impeded by "hard stones."

They regard many symptoms on the body of a dying per-⁷⁸³
son, or on the bodies of relatives, and above all, strange ways
of behaviour among animals, as precursors of death.

3. He who treads on a grave, passes one unscathed, or⁷⁶⁹
points at a grave with his finger has disturbed the rest of⁷⁸⁷
the dead and must expect his revenge. When the corpse of⁷⁶¹
an acquaintance or a relative appears to one in a dream, he